

Academic Science on the Interdisciplinary Approach to the Analysis and Evaluation of Russian Spatial Development

Voronov, Victor

Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version

Rezension / review

Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Voronov, V. (2014). Academic Science on the Interdisciplinary Approach to the Analysis and Evaluation of Russian Spatial Development. [Review of the book *Basic problems of the spatial development of the Russian Federation: An interdisciplinary synthesis; multi-authored monograph* Baltic Region, 4, 116-122. <https://doi.org/10.5922/2074-2079-8555-4-9>

Nutzungsbedingungen:

Dieser Text wird unter einer Free Digital Peer Publishing Licence zur Verfügung gestellt. Nähere Auskünfte zu den DiPP-Lizenzen finden Sie hier: <http://www.dipp.nrw.de/lizenzen/dppl/service/dppl/>

Terms of use:

This document is made available under a Free Digital Peer Publishing Licence. For more Information see: <http://www.dipp.nrw.de/lizenzen/dppl/service/dppl/>

REVIEWS



ACADEMIC SCIENCE ON THE INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH TO ANALYSING AND EVALUATING SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT IN RUSSIA

Фундаментальные проблемы пространственного развития Российской Федерации: междисциплинарный синтез : коллективная монография. — М. : Медиа-Пресс, 2013. — 663 с.

(*Basic problems of the spatial development of the Russian Federation: An interdisciplinary synthesis : multi-authored monograph. — М. : Media-Press, 2013. — 663 pp.*)

The transformation processes and “different” rates of socioeconomic changes in global and local spaces of the modern world and Russia necessitate research on the problems of socioeconomic relations (interests, behaviour, and interactions of their agents) in the spatial discourse. The monograph under review presents the key results of the Programme for Basic Research implemented in 2009—2011 by employees of more than thirty institutes of the Russian Academy of Sciences. The scope and significance of the study is unprecedented for Russian academic science. Due to insufficient coordination and financing, research on the basic problems of spatial development of the Russian Federation focused on narrow topics and was poorly organised. It was especially evident against the background of the achievements of international research community in studying spatial development issues, as well as the significance of these problems for such a space-dependent as Russia. The available knowledge on the space of Russia, its current condition, and prospects is insufficient either for understanding the reasons and nature of the transformations causing a sharp increase in spatial and socioeconomic disparities or the identification of the challenges and threats to the country’s integrity. Moreover, the concept of market-driven spatial economic development was created in the course of liberal reforms without taking into account the actual trends in the development and transformation of regions, the actual possibility of efficient governmental control based on a single consistent and consolidation regional policy.



The book consists of two parts: the first one is dedicated to basic and conceptual issues. Its ten chapters focus on the factors and features of the transformation of the socioeconomic and sociocultural space, as well as the spatial aspects of the development of the country's innovative system. The second part concentrates on theoretical and methodological problems and is of applied relevance. Its eight chapters describe the tools for analysis, forecasting, and improving the territorial organisation of a state, as well as creating a system of spatial planning, development, and consolidation of space along the north-south and west-west axes. Each of the 18 chapters is dedicated to solving a certain spatial regional problem. However, all of them are structured according to the basic idea of synthesis. This synthesis is largely based on the "groundwork" provided by both Russian (Academician A.G. Granberg, the initiator and first coordinator of the Programme, p. 38) and international (F. Braudel and I. Wallerstein, etc.) scholars in view of the emergence of a new techno-economic paradigm.

The new research problems formulated and solved within the Programme and presented in the monograph are as follows. Territorial structures of different level are identified and studied in the course of their interaction and development. A comparative analysis of current trends in the transformation of territorial structures in the developed countries and Russia is carried out. A research framework for a regional policy is created for the purposes of forecasting and programming a long-term socioeconomic development of Russia. Recommendations on organising a system of scientific examination of managerial decisions made in the field of spatial development in the Russian Federation. Moreover, the basic problems of the spatial development of the country and its regions are described using the new principles of deploying productive forces. Possible areas of application of interdisciplinary efforts are identified (Chapter 1 (pp. 31—43) "The conceptual framework of the spatial approach" authored by P. A. Minakir, A.N. Demyanenko, A.N. Pilyasov; Chapter 6 (p. 190—256) "The evolution, modernisation, and new development of the socioeconomic space"; Chapter 17 (p. 570—611) "Methodology and tools for analysing and forecasting the spatial structure of Russian economy).

It is worth emphasising the role of sociology as an integrator of knowledge on the spatial development of Russia. Chapter 5 (p. 162—182) "Transformation of the sociocultural space of Russia (N.I. Lapin, V.V. Markin, L.M. Drobizheva, I.A. Khaliy) focuses on the key theoretical and methodological issues of regional identification and social modelling of Russian regions and their sociological interpretation. The typological framework of social modelling of regions (stan-



dards of living, mentality, innovative development vector, etc.) is verified and the opportunities for using it are identified in the case of certain regions and territories granted a special status. Social modernisation is considered the main condition for innovative development of regions and the improvement of living standards. In this relation, it is important to pay attention to the analysed aspects of risk-bearing misalignment of components of Russia's sociocultural space, the multi-level nature of the socio-territorial identification of Russians, the development of public and civil identity and cross-ethnic cohesion, and the duality of value hierarchy as prerequisites to a civil conflict, etc.

A concept of spatial demography and social environment in the regional context is presented in Chapter 4 (p. 120—161). It is shown that the increasing socioeconomic disparities pose an obstacle to the demographic growth; the authors carry out an assessment of human potential necessary for a modernisation breakthrough in Russia and the world.

The authors analyse trends affecting the role of natural and resource factors in the spatial socioeconomic development. Detailed information is given on the impact of climate change on navigation in the Arctic in the 21st century and the effect of weather anomalies on the economy and health of the northern population.

The monograph studies the impact of changeability of available water resources and their quality on the socioeconomic development of the country and emphasises the role of water problems in ensuring national and environmental security (Chapter 3, p. 88—119).

Mathematical models are used to analyse and show the possibilities of optimising the development of energy infrastructure and public transport to reduce energy costs for the end consumer. It is proposed to conduct zoning based on the conditions of energy production and consumption distribution, as well as the existing and forecasted transport-energy connections (Chapter 7, c.257—305).

The authors present a methodological framework for forecasting the development of a single transport space in Russia and its regions, which would be harmonised with a rational structure of productive forces distribution. Scenario calculations are carried out for the development of transport corridors and logistics hubs with a special emphasis on the Asian part of the country and individual regions of Siberia (Chapter 8, p. 306—330).

The monograph justifies the impact of information technology of the spatial socioeconomic development. Predictive estimates and the actual results of IT development are compared; global and national features and trends are identified. The monograph presents a classification of the key aspects of Russian public policy in the field and analyses the composition and content of the existing legal regulations (Chapter 9, p. 331—358).

The authors identify the ways of solving spatial and environmental issues of innovative development and problems of creating a favourable investment climate on different territories through developing regional innovative development institutions in view of the local conditions, on the one hand, and using federal tool of spatial coordination, on the other (Chapter 10, p. 359—394).

Suggestions on the modernisation of development strategies are put forward for the cases of four macroregions — Far East, Siberia, the Urals, North-West, and the North. An algorithm is proposed for studying newly developed territories (Chapters 11—15, p. 395—537).

The authors identify the most acute problems and basic contradictions in the socioeconomic and ethnopolitical development of Russia's South. The monograph addresses the key features of the multi-religious and multi-ethnic North Caucasus macroregion, which result in a strong interdependence between the socio-cultural, ethnopolitical, and economic processes. It is shown that the development of the situation in the North Caucasus follows a “no change” scenarios with elements of the random approach and the use of force (Chapter 16, p. 538—569).

The research framework of enhancing the territorial organisation of the states and creating a system of spatial planning is presented. The authors propose a package of flexible regulatory tools (organisational, methodological, and information ones), which would ensure a coordinated interaction between the federal and sub-federal authorities and economic entities in developing concepts and strategies (Chapter 18, p. 612—650).

The key results of the interdisciplinary approach presented in the monograph is the expansion of the scientific understanding of the country's space, the factors and trends of its transformation, and the possibilities and methods of public control of processes caused by spatial issues. These findings are aimed to contribute to the preservation of the country's integrity and an increase in its territorial cohesion in view of the current global and Russian conditions.

It is difficult to criticise the ideas presented in the book — the fruit of strenuous efforts of the leading specialists of the Russian Academy of Sciences, — however, one can make the following remarks.

The essence of the monograph is clearly formulated in the chapter “The conceptual framework of the spatial approach” (p. 31—43). In the case of Russia, “spatial science” focuses on the “social space” as the site of the comprehensive development of a human being. If the birthplace of a human being is a certain settlement, the place of their development is the social space, where their life unfolds in various forms of physical and mental efforts. Here, it would seem logical to carry out an analysis of the Soviet practices of developing and reproducing the “social space” as a site of the comprehensive de-



velopment of each and, thus, all members of society based on the principles of social equity and productive labour within the current techno-economic paradigm. Moreover, the Soviet Union developed tools for effective consolidation and integration of a vast social space: a common language of communication (Russian) as expression of the civilizational sociocultural code, a common currency (rouble) of an independent financial and economic system, a single Consumption Fund, which accumulated 75 % of the national income and served the purpose of social equity at the level of consumption of material and non-material goods by all members of society. In view of its vastness, the independent development of Russian social space is hardly possible based on the sole principle of consumer society. It would require a quantitative and qualitative expansion of the scope for the actualisation of capabilities of the economically active population, which can be possible only based on the principles of a labour-productive society.

The analysis of different types of spatial development at all (mega-, macro-, and micro-) levels is rather comprehensive. However, it lacks a detailed typology and classification of regions using the criterion of socio-spatial identity. Such attempt is made only in the mentioned chapter “Transformation of the sociocultural space of Russia” using the categories of “resource potential” and “development level.” It is possible to supplement it with the categories of “median value,” “North-South,” and others (p. 162—189). Moreover, the chapters are not harmonised in the context of individual types of spaces. The monograph does not address the problem of Russian frontier: the state that produced the Russian people as a carrier of the Russian sociocultural (civilizational) code should consolidate the diversity of cultures within the Eurasian discourse as a common idea of social equity and the humanistic vector. Unfortunately, the key thesis that “the uncertainty of the transformation vector requires answering the question as to whether this process is oriented towards meeting the increasing needs of the population and the development of human capabilities (humanistic vector) or it alienates masses from the vital needs and individual development (non-humanistic vector)” is merely formulated but not elaborated (p. 163). In the West, “spatial economy” as a geopolitical method of generating social connection is the expansion of resource territories in line with the “vital interests” of the nation based on calculating the cost-effectiveness ratio against the accumulation of power for achieving the goal (rational purpose approach). In Russia, “spatial economy” as a chronographic means of generating social connections is a strategy for accumulation and consolidation of ethnic, cultural, and economic elements as an integral whole for its self-



development based on productive labour (value approach). The reason behind it is civilizational differences; therefore, the automatic adoption will not yield anything except social chimeras akin to “capitalism with a human face” (an integral, convergent society) or “socialism with a human face” (a market socialism society), etc.

The authors stress that Russian innovative process is determined by the fact that, following the disintegration of the USSR, the import of technology significantly outstripped domestic research development, which was reinforced through the structure of innovation expenditure, which has undergone few changes over the last 10—15 years. A major part (60 %) is allocated for purchasing equipment, whereas only 10 % is spent on R&D. Russia’s innovative ratio is opposite to the innovative priorities of developed economies, where enterprises strive to stimulate R&D rather than purchase equipment. For instance, R&D accounts for half of companies’ innovation expenditure in Germany, 65 % in Sweden, almost 70 % in France (purchase of equipment accounts for 25 % in Germany, 10 % in France, and 2—3 % in Sweden) (p. 348). The unfavourable situation with hi-tech development in Russian economy is a product of the primitive part the latter plays in the international division of labour — exchanging low-tech goods (mainly, raw materials) or imported hi-tech goods and technology. However, solution to the problem is not clearly formulated in the monograph: “discoveries and invention do not turn into working capital, nor does it arouse the interest of investors” (p. 362). Should not the state represented by its executive power invest into breakthrough technologies developing within the current techno-economic paradigm for making a “modernisation leap”? Moreover, the Russian innovative system is increasingly embedded in the global value added chains, which are completely and strictly controlled by international producers — mainly, large multinational corporations. Why should international competitors invest into the country’s development? Therefore, there is a need to replace the unfavourable institutional environment in Russian regions from the perspective of the methods and tools of a mobilisation development strategy under the competent control of the state. Unfortunately, these strategies are merely outlined in the book and lack detailed elaboration.

One cannot but agree with the central conclusion made by the authors that world elites — supported to a degree by the federal authorities and economic structures — to give the Siberian regions the role of a mere supplier of raw materials to developed economies. Today, the world benefits from such regions being raw-material suppliers rather than developed macroregion sharing the ambitions of the other Russian territories. The authors are right to conclude that the

diversification of a virtual colonial structure of Siberian economies and development of processing facilities for economic and geopolitical processes are a domestic problem that should be solved within the country (p. 420—421).

The forecasts of general rates of the country's development presented in the monograph are rather pessimistic (p. 435—437). It seems that, today, Russia and its regions are at the dead-end of bureaucratic and oligarchic capitalism. Sustainable economic development can rest on different principles; however, they are merely outlined in the monograph. It is worth noting that Russian academic community has been discussing a change in the socioeconomic paradigm with some success. The years of reforms have shown that it is impossible to build a society of social equity based on the hegemony of private property (especially, in the form of foreign capital), whereas a convergent society can be only a transitional form (socialism and capitalism cannot be equally turn in cognition. One of these forms of organisation will prevail with time, which will have evident consequences for social development.

These minor drawbacks seem to be inevitable when combining the results of eight seven authors. However, there are several misprints; for instance, the name of one of the authors is spelled incorrectly (p. 661).

One can only hope that the findings presented in the monograph will be taken into account in the new strategy for socioeconomic development (especially, in its regional aspects), which will help Russia take a strong position in the world. Therefore, there is a need for further research on the spatial development of Russia and its regions based on the interdisciplinary approach and a single methodology. It will also require an analysis of alternative scenarios, including the relevant strategy of mobilised socioeconomic development in view of the great legacy of Russia, which is being carried out within the new basic research programme of the Russian Academy of Sciences entitled *The role of space in Russian modernisation: the environmental and socioeconomic potential*.

Research experience suggests that such programmes be implemented only by the Russian Academy of Sciences, which has enough resources to combine the efforts of specialists in different fields within a single methodological framework of the “differentiation and consolidation of social space”.

About the author

Victor Voronov, Dr hab., leading researcher, Institute for Social Research, Daugavpils University, Latvia; expert in sociology and economics Science Council of the Latvian Academy of Sciences.

E-mail: viktor.voronov@du.lv